

Better than Gold

A Play for Girls

By S. M. H.



Price, 40 Cents

"Le Manitoba," Printers—St. Boniface

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MARY; A.S.

BETTER THAN GOLD

CHARACTERS

MRS. LINDSEY, *Governess and housekeeper in the family of Mr. Belmont.*

MISS STEWART, *A school-teacher.*

MRS. HADLEY

MRS. AIKEN

MISS STONE

} *Members of a Shakespeare Club.*

ROSEMARY, *Adopted daughter of Mr. Belmont.*

ISABEL,

PAULINE,

PATSY,

ANNETTE,

LAURA,

} *Nieces of Mr. Belmont.*

} *Schoolgirls.*

Eight or ten other schoolgirls taking part in a Maypole dance.

BETTER THAN GOLD

ACT I

SCENE—*An apartment in Mr. Belmont's house. Rosemary is occupied with some embroidery.*

Rosemary. They must be having an exciting election at school since the girls are so late in returning. I admit I am rather curious to hear the result, though I have little doubt that Pauline will be chosen for the position of honor. She is very eager to be elected, and would, I am sure, make a very charming queen for our May-day entertainment.

(Isabel, Annette, and Laura hurry in.)

Isabel. O Rosemary! you ought to have been at the election; it was exciting, I assure you.

Annette. Guess who received the greatest number of votes.

Rosemary. I have no idea. The chosen one was to be the most popular girl in the school, was she not?

Laura. Yes, that was the only condition. We all thought we were extremely popular till the votes revealed the humiliating fact that there are only three very popular girls; the rest of us had no chance at all.

Annette. Alas for disappointed ambitions!

Rosemary. You don't look broken-hearted over it. But do tell me who was the successful candidate.

Isabel. Can't you guess?

Rosemary. No, and I am really very curious.

Isabel. Well, we shall not keep you in suspense any longer. In choosing our Queen of May, the girls voted almost unanimously for my dear friend and cousin, Rosemary *(Embracing her affectionately)*.

Rosemary. For me! How did that happen?

Annette. Because you deserve it, I suppose. We are all glad, Rosemary, and offer our hearty congratulations.

Laura. You would have been proud if you could have heard all the girls after the election shouting "Long live our Queen of May!"

Rosemary. That is certainly very gratifying, and I appreciate the girls' friendliness in choosing me.

Annette. How calm you are, Rosemary! Why don't you get excited,—as I should, if the girls had elected me,—and jump around and sing with Tennyson's heroine, "I'm to be Queen of the May, Mother, I'm to be Queen of the May!"

Isabel. Because Rosemary is not a conceited little feather-brain like that girl.—But really, Rosemary, you take your election very sedately; are you not pleased at the result?

Rosemary. Why, yes, Isabel; I certainly feel honored by the girls' choice. But I am thinking of Pauline. You know she had set her heart on being the May Queen, and I fear she will be dreadfully disappointed.

Isabel. Well, she had the second largest number of votes, and will have to be satisfied with that.

Laura. (Solemnly) Life is full of shattered hopes, and—

Annette. Now don't try to be a philosopher, Laura; it's not in your line. Remember, we promised to call at Clara Burne's and tell her the news, so come along; it's time we should be off.—(Curtsying to Rosemary) Good-by, your Majesty. We'll be happy to dance around the Maypole in your honor when you take possession of your throne.

Rosemary. (Laughing) Thank you. I shall be delighted to have you both for my Maids-of-honor. (*Annette and Laura go out. Isabel and Rosemary seat themselves.*)

Rosemary. Now tell me everything that went on at school. Is the program for Commencement Day all arranged?

Isabel. Yes, the girls have all decided that they want an outdoor festival this year, and Miss Stewart is willing. The crowning of the May Queen and a Maypole dance in traditional form will be the chief features; but there will also be some athletic sports and games for which prizes will be given.

Rosemary. Pauline can not be surpassed in those contests, and I hope she will gain many prizes.

Isabel. Now, Rosemary, your mind is again running on Pauline. Why do you care so much that her ambitions should be realized?

Rosemary. Well, as you say, Pauline is ambitious, and sometimes I think that her unfriendliness towards me arises from the fact that she thinks I stand in her way.

Isabel. O do not mind Pauline; she is a little spoiled and wilful, and has other friends; that is all.

Rosemary. I hope so. I was so glad to welcome my unknown cousins, and hoped that you would all enjoy the year at your Uncle Frank's home.

Isabel. We have indeed, dear Rosemary. It was so good of Uncle to invite us here for our graduation year, and you made us feel at home from the first.

Rosemary. I am glad to hear you say so. And when you return, crowned with your graduation laurels, to your own home, will you leave little Patsy with me? She and I are fast friends, and I shall be lonely in this great house without some young persons to keep me company.

Isabel. She is such a mischievous little creature that I fear—
(*Patsy runs in gaily tossing a ball.*)

Patsy. Now you were talking about me; weren't you, Cousin Rose?

Rosemary. Yes, dear. I was saying that I would like to keep you with me next year, after your sisters return home; would you like that?

Patsy. O yes! it would be jolly. Pauline wouldn't be scolding me all the time; and you don't make a fuss when I break things.

Isabel. (*Laughing*) Is it a part of your daily program, Patsy, to break things?

Patsy. Well, they just seem to tumble when I'm around. But Uncle Frank is rich, and he can buy some more.—Is it true you are going to be the May Queen, Rosemary?

Rosemary. Yes, Patsy; think what an honor!

Patsy. (*Skipping about*) O I am so glad, so glad! The girls showed some sense for once, Rosie dear (*embracing her*), for of course you are the nicest girl in the school.

Rosemary. Thank you for the compliment. What about you and your little friend Effie?

Patsy. O we don't count—*now*; but just wait till we are graduates, and see if we don't make things lively! But,

Rosie, when you are Queen, I want to be your little page; may I?

Rosemary. But, Patsy, only boys are pages.

Patsy. Well, I mean your bridesmaid, or maid-of-honor, or whatever they call it.

Rosemary. O I understand. If it will please you, I shall be most happy to have you and your young friend for my maids-of-honor.

Patsy. Hurrah! I must go and tell Effie. (*Runs out.*)

Rosemary. (*Laughing*) What an enthusiastic little creature!

Isabel. Yes, and too full of pranks for the peace of the household; but fortunately you can control her. Really, Rosemary, I think Patsy loves you more than any one of her own family. But we are not jealous, for you are always so patient with her that you fully deserve her affection.

Rosemary. I am more than repaid; for she is a very loyal little friend, and has brought much joy into my lonely life.

Isabel. Are you not happy, dear Rose? I do not understand it; you are the only child of a rich father, you have a beautiful home, everything one could desire, and yet you often seem sad; why is it?

Rosemary. It is true, I have all those advantages you mentioned, and they might be enough to make some girls happy. But there are things more valuable than riches, Isabel, and the chief of these is a mother's love.

Isabel. Ah! I understand, dear Rose; you miss the dear mother who died some years ago?

Rosemary. So long ago, in my early childhood, that I can not even remember her; but her loss is a daily sorrow.

Isabel. I believe you, dear Rose; with your affectionate nature, you must sorely miss a mother's care and love.

Rosemary. More than I can tell you.—But I must not burden you with my troubles. I have orders to give to the maids, as father expects some guests for dinner; so I must leave you now to dream of the graduation honors so soon coming to you. (*Exit.*)

Isabel. Yes, I shall certainly be pleased when that precious diploma, for which I have worked so hard, is safe in my hands. But if dear mother were not present to see me receive my laurels, I should care little for the honors of graduation.

Poor Rosemary! I can well understand how she feels. The joys and triumphs of life are of little value, if we have no one to share them with us. (*Looking around*). I should die of the blues if I had to live alone in this stately mansion with that solemn stately gentleman, my worthy uncle. He is kind in his own way, generous with his money, but cold as a marble statue, and poor Rosemary is pining for a little natural, human affection.

(*Pauline enters with a bundle of papers*)

Pauline. Guess what treasures I carry here, Isabel.

Isabel. Only papers, to all appearances; but perhaps they are very valuable: the laws of the Medes and Persians? or only the Constitution of the United States?

Pauline. Something far more valuable to us schoolgirls: the trophies of our victory—or defeat.

Isabel. You mean our competition essays for the Shakespeare scholarship? How did they come into your possession?

Pauline. This way: Miss Stewart confided to me these precious literary productions to be deposited with due solemnity on our library table for the inspection and judicial decision of the eminent ladies of the Shakespeare Club.

Isabel. Are they all coming here?

Pauline. No, only a committee of three who will examine our valuable essays, and decide who is to be the happy recipient of their hundred-dollar scholarship. I hope I shall be the lucky one. I would jump over the table for joy.

Isabel. (*Laughing*) And break your neck in the attempt. That wouldn't help you any in your ambitious projects to win distinction, renown, and all worldly honors.

(*Patsy comes in unobserved, sits at a side table, and for a time works vigorously at a problem with paper and pencil, then follows the conversation with signs of great interest.*)

Pauline. Oh! you may laugh at me, Isabel, but I am serious in my determination to win distinction of some sort. I am bound to get a "B. A." degree, and this \$100 prize would help greatly for a start.

Isabel. I wish you all success, Pauline; but with so many clever girls in the class, do you think you have much chance?

Pauline. Yes, I have. Miss Stewart told me that the Club ladies

would not examine all the compositions, but had left her to choose the three best, and they would decide among those. See! I have the three essays here.

Isabel. And is yours among them?

Pauline. Yes, I am sorry, Isabel, but yours was put aside.

Isabel. O I expected that, and am not disappointed. I have no talent for composition. Do you know the names of the girls who wrote the other two?

Pauline. Yes, Miss Stewart told me. Jenny Sharpe and (bitterly) of course, Rosemary.

Isabel. Why do you speak so bitterly, Pauline? You know Rosemary is clever, and if she gets the prize, we ought to be very glad.

Pauline. No, I shall not be glad, and there's no use pretending I am. Rosemary was chosen May Queen and that is a sufficient honor for her.

Isabel. Don't be so ill-natured, Pauline. Rosemary is good and amiable and deserves the honors she receives.

Pauline. Perhaps she does, but it makes me angry to see all the good things of life falling to that girl who has no more right to them than you or I,—not half so much.

Isabel. What do you mean?

Pauline. Oh! you know very well, Isabel; one can't keep a thing like that secret. Everybody in town, except Rosemary herself, knows that she is not Uncle Frank's daughter, but was only adopted by him, and rather to please his wife than himself.

Isabel. Yes, I have heard the story. Poor Rosemary! She is more to be pitied than envied, Pauline; for, although enjoying abundant riches, she has neither father nor mother to give her the love she craves.

Pauline. But she lives like a princess; sometimes I just feel like telling her that she hasn't a particle of right to all the money she spends so freely or to the fortune she expects to inherit. By right, it should come to us, who are Uncle Frank's nearest relatives.

Isabel. We can do without his money, Pauline, for we are both able to work, and we have a greater blessing in our dear father and mother, while poor Rosemary has neither.

Pauline. How do you know that? I have found out more than you think, Isabel. I know that Rosemary has a mother living, though I do not suppose it is one whom she would be proud of.

Isabel. Do not accept blindly every idle story you hear, Pauline; and above all, I beg of you, do not let any of these rumors reach Rosemary's ears, or say anything that would hurt her feelings. It would be a poor return for the lavish hospitality we have enjoyed here all year.

Pauline. The house and all that is in it belong as much to us as to her.

Isabel. That may be, but Rosemary does not know it, and we are just as much indebted to her kindness.

Pauline. *(Carelessly)* O I shan't spoil her fun, so long as she does not interfere with me. But if she gets the scholarship, and I don't —

Isabel. The decision doesn't rest with Rosemary. Do be sensible, Pauline, and don't blame your mishaps on the wrong person. — Now help me put the room in order for the ladies of the committee. It must be nearly time for their meeting.

(Patsy slides behind a fire-screen.)

Pauline. Yes, I suppose they will soon arrive.

Isabel. Well, tell Miss Stewart that everything is ready for the ladies when she wishes to bring them here. I will find Patsy and try to amuse her; for she must not come in here while our visitors remain, or she would disturb their meeting. *(Pauline goes out.)* I wonder where that child is? She seemed quiet enough a little while ago, and now she has disappeared,—up to some mischief, I suppose. *(Exit.)*

Patsy. *(Coming out of her place of concealment, and dancing around)* O yes, Patsy is tired of her stupid old lessons, and intends to amuse herself. You may call it mischief, if you like, my dear Isabel, but I call it an act of justice. I won't have the prize going to Pauline, the cross old thing! I want Rosemary to get it, and I'll see that she does. *(Goes over to the table and picks up the first essay, as Rosemary enters.)* This is Rosemary's composition, I know it by the pretty writing; I'll leave that on top. This must be the other girl's,—what's her name?—Jenny Sharpe; and here's Pauline's, I know it by the fancy tails to the p's and q's. Now,

I'll just take this off, and drop it into the kitchen fire.
(Turns and sees Rosemary.)

Rosemary. O what is my naughty little cousin doing?

Patsy. Nothing naughty, Rosemary. I'm just punishing a bad girl; that's right, isn't it? You shouldn't stop me when I am trying to be good.

Rosemary. O Patsy! I fear your ideas of good and bad are not very clear. What are you going to do with that composition you have in your hand?

Patsy. Burn it. It's Pauline's, and I don't want her to get the prize. I want you to have it.

Rosemary. I appreciate your affection for me, little cousin, but I would not wish to win the prize by any such unfair means as you propose. Besides, I really wish Pauline to gain it, for she has set her heart on having the scholarship, and I hope she will not be disappointed.

Patsy. O she'll be hopping mad if she doesn't win; but I don't care.

Rosemary. Now, Patsy dear, give me that paper and let me put it on the table with the others.

Patsy. (Holding it tightly) I'd much rather burn it.

Rosemary. Will you wait five minutes?

Patsy. (Laughing) No, I'll wait just two minutes, if you like.

Rosemary. Very well. Go and watch the hands of the clock over there, (motioning to the opposite side of the room) and come back at the end of two minutes. (Patsy does so, and while her back is turned, Rosemary tears up her own composition.)

Rosemary. (Showing the fragments as Patsy returns) See, Patsy, here's all that is left of my composition; so, as I can not win the prize, will you put back Pauline's paper and give her a chance?

Patsy. (Disappointed) Now, Rosie, you were naughty to do that. Well, I'll put this back, for I'd rather have Pauline get the prize than Jenny Sharpe; she pulled my hair once and call me "an ugly little monkey." You don't think I am, do you, Rosemary?

Rosemary. No, Patsy, you're the dearest little cousin in the world. Now run to the playroom, and I will join you there in a little while. (Exit).

Patsy. It would be lots more fun to stay here and bother those old maids who are coming here to drink tea, while they pretend they are deeply interested in Literature.—I know what I'll do! They expect to find three compositions here, and there are only two. I will put in one of my own, and it will be jolly to hear their comments on my juvenile performance.—Let me see: what is the title of their precious essay? (*Leans over the table to read the title.*) "Lessons from Shakespeare's Women." — What were they giving, lessons about, I wonder? and how many women had he? Oh! I am afraid I am dreadfully ignorant. Who was Shakespeare anyway? I think he wrote something about Lambs' Tails. Queer! you'd think he would have written about their heads or nice little woolly backs.—But perhaps I have things mixed up. (*Picks up a book and reads the title.*) "Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare". That's the thing! I never read a line of Shakespeare, but these stories are all that I need for the stunning composition I shall write for those old ladies. (*Hurries out with the book and a pad of paper.*)

(*Rosemary enters*)

Rosemary. (*Looking around*) I think everything is ready for the ladies of the committee, so I will go and see if they have all arrived.

(*Mrs. Lindsey enters.*)

Mrs. L. Have I remained away too long. Miss Rosemary? I intended to return sooner, but my poor old Aunt, who is more ill than I imagined, begged me to stay with her.

Rosemary. You did perfectly right, Mrs. Lindsey. Please consider that you have entire liberty to remain away whenever you think best. Now that my school-days are over, I feel quite able to attend to the house-keeping myself.

Mrs. L. (*Slowly*) Does that mean that you no longer require my services?

Rosemary. O Mrs. Lindsey, no; how could you make such a mistake? I should be lonely indeed without you. I believe you are the one person in the world whom I really love.

Mrs. L. It is very sweet to hear you say so, Miss Rosemary.

Rosemary. O please do not say "Miss" any more. I want you to call me just "Rosemary."

Mrs. L. But are you sure that your father—I mean,—that Mr. Belmont would like it?

Rosemary. It makes no difference whether he likes it or not. I don't believe he cares enough for me to mind what people call me or how they treat me, so long as he does not have to bother himself about me.

Mrs. L. Why, Rosemary, you surprise me. I never heard you speak in that way before about your—about Mr. Belmont. Is he not kind to you?

Rosemary. Well, he lets me do as I please, and pays all my bills, if you call that kindness; but I want something more.
(Sinks into a chair sobbing.)

Mrs. L. (In distress.) My poor little girl! I thought you were perfectly happy.

Rosemary. Well, I am not. Father thinks only of his business, and hardly ever speaks to me; and when he does, he is so cold and formal that one would think I didn't belong to him.

Mrs. L. (Aside) Alas! has my terrible sacrifice been all in vain?—But you enjoy the company of your young cousins, do you not, Rosemary?

Rosemary. I am fond of Isabel, who has been a dear, good friend to me; but Pauline seems to dislike me, and take an air of hostility that I do not understand. Dear little Patsy loves me, but the mischievous little elf is more of a worry than a comfort. Oh! if I only had a mother, like other girls, who would love me and let me love her to my heart's content. (Weeps.)

Mrs. L. (Aside) Oh! if I had known that I should ever hear that anguished cry!—My dear child,—allow me to call you so,—if my love can comfort you—

Rosemary. O dear Mrs. Lindsey, I am not ungrateful for your kind care of me. Ever since I lost my own mother, you have been like a mother to me, both as governess then as our devoted housekeeper; and I love you dearly. But, (hesitating) you understand, it can not be quite the same as if you were my own, own mother.

Mrs. L. (Aside, in anguish) O the bitter, bitter truth!—(Sadly) No, Rosemary, I understand; it can not be just the same.

Rosemary. But remember, Mrs. Lindsey, you are dearer to me than any one else; and I want you to promise that you will never leave me.

Mrs. L. With all my heart, I promise, dear. I have no other desire than to be near you, no other interest in life than to see you happy.—(*Aside*) O if she knew how true that is!—Can I do anything now to please you or to help you?

Rosemary. No, thank you, Mrs. Lindsey. Try to forget this outburst. I must learn to bear my burdens alone.

Mrs. L. (Hesitating) Would it not help you to confide your troubles sometimes to me, Rosemary?

Rosemary. Perhaps, but I must not be selfish, and I am inclined to think you have sorrows of your own, Mrs. Lindsey, though you try to conceal them.

Mrs. L. True, Rosemary, my heart is well-nigh breaking at times with the weight of a great sorrow. But it is my own fault, so I must not complain.

Rosemary. You have my sympathy, Mrs. Lindsey, but I have no right to question you.

Mrs. L. You have the right of one whom I trust and love, Rosemary, but I must not forget my position as Mr. Belmont's housekeeper. At present, my duty is to see if refreshments have been prepared for your guests.

Rosemary. They are not exactly my guests, as naturally I am not to be present at their meeting, (*laughing*) being, as supposed, a candidate for the literary honors these good ladies will bestow. Miss Stewart will be hostess to-day, but I will go and tell her that everything is ready for the committee who will decide on the merits of our valuable compositions. They will have trouble finding mine in the waste-basket, where I am willing it should rest in peace. (*They go out on opposite sides.*)

(*Patsy runs in.*)

Patsy (Looking around) Hurrah! Those wise old ladies haven't arrived yet. (*Places her composition on top of the other papers on the table.*) There! if that piece of writing doesn't give them an awful shock, nothing ever will.—Now I'll just slip into my old hiding-place behind this screen and peek out now and then to see the fun. (*She does so, as the ladies enter.*)

Miss Stewart. Now, ladies, make yourselves comfortable around this table while you examine my pupils' essays. I have selected the three best, as you requested, and I must say that I think they are really excellent, considering the age of the young composers.

Mrs. Hadley. But will you not remain, Miss Stewart? Your opinions would help us greatly in making a just decision.

Miss Stuart. Thank you, but I would rather not stay. I know the three young candidates so well that my knowledge of their character and attainments might influence my choice.

Mrs. Hadley. Probably you are right. Well, we shall do our best to see that the most deserving shall get the scholarship.

Mrs. Aiken. Are the three essays arranged in any special order?

Miss Stewart. Since you wished it, I have placed on top the essay that appears to me the most satisfactory. But you may not agree with me, and I defer entirely to your judgment.
(Exit.)

Mrs. Aiken. Miss Stewart has such correct literary taste that it is probable we shall approve her choice.

Mrs. Hadley. Miss Stone, as you are a school-teacher yourself, you will be the best judge of the technicalities of style, etc. Will you be so kind as to read the essays aloud to us? we shall give you our most careful attention.

Miss Stone. Very well. I trust my reading will not detract from the literary merits of the essays. (*Takes up the first*). Ah! the subject could not have been better chosen. (*Examines the first page and hesitates.*) The writing is hardly a credit to a young lady about to graduate, and the blots and erasures give an untidy appearance to the first page.

Mrs. Aiken. That rather surprises me, as I thought Miss Stewart was very particular about the handwriting of her pupils and the general neatness of their work.

Mrs. Hadley. Possibly the composition itself is so superior in merit that Miss Stewart overlooked other particulars in this instance.

(*Patsy thrusts her head out from time to time, laughing with glee and clapping her hands in delight.*)

Miss Stone. Perhaps so. Well, I will read the substance of the essay:—

"Lessons from Shakespeare's Women"

"I don't know why he had so many women, unless Shakespeare was a Turk, and then I should think his lessons would be no good,—to Christians, anyway."

(The ladies look at one another in surprise.)

Mrs. Aiken. That is a very extraordinary beginning, and shows either complete ignorance of the subject or unpardonable levity.—Continue, please.

Miss Stone. *(Reading)* "Of all Shakespeare's women, I like Jessica best, because she ran away from home and fooled her father, that horrid old miser, Shylock."

Mrs. Hadley. What a shocking lack of principle!

Mrs. Aiken. I fear the young person who wrote those lines is utterly depraved.

Miss Stone. I am as much astonished as you are, ladies; but I think we had better continue the reading of this composition, and learn its general import.

Mrs. Hadley. *(Resigned)* Continue.

Miss Stone. *(Reading)* "Most people rave about Portia in this play, but I think she was a fool. *(The ladies gasp.)* When her lover came in to choose the casket, why on earth didn't she wink at him or something, when he was near the right one? It would have settled the matter at once, and saved us schoolgirls the trouble of reading a lot of foolish stuff that Shakespeare puts in the mouths of the three suitors."

Mrs. Hadley. Horrors! Shakespeare's beautiful poetry called "stuff!" The language of this giddy schoolgirl is as deplorable as her sentiments.—But read on.

Miss Stone. *(Reading)* "Critics make a fuss about Lady Macbeth, but it ain't no use trying to make a tragic heroine out of her"—

Mrs. Aiken. *(Holding up her hands in horror.)* "It ain't no use!"—Do you mean to say that so incorrect and vulgar an expression actually occurs in a composition by one of Miss Stewart's pupils?

Miss Stone. The words are certainly here, but I am at a loss to understand how the girl's teacher could tolerate such language, still less recommend a composition containing such sentiments and expressions.

Mrs. Aiken. I shall certainly tell Miss Stewart what I think of this unworthy treatment of a most noble subject.

Mrs. Hadley. Well, it will be interesting to hear this young critic's views of Lady Macbeth.

Miss Stone. (Reading) "Some actresses try to make a hit by strutting around the stage in a night-dress,—I saw that in the movies,—looking scared as if they had seen a ghost, pretending they are Lady Macbeth walking in her sleep. Nonsense! I bet it wasn't any thought of the murder that made her cut up such capers at night-time, but a fit of indigestion. Probably she had eaten too much pie for supper."

Mrs. Hadley. (Ironically) A very original interpretation of the famous night-walking scene! Really, the young author should publish her views.

Miss Stone. Shall I read any more?

Mrs. Aiken. The composition does not appear to be long; so perhaps we can listen to a few more ideas of Miss Stewart's star pupil.

Miss Stone. (Reading) "In conclusion, I must mention Rosalind, the heroine of 'As You Like It'. If we are bound to find a lesson in the doings or sayings of Shakespeare's Women, I think that Rosalind gives the best lessons. She was very independent in the matter of dress, going around in men's clothes; she never did any work, but spent her time in idleness, roaming about in a pleasant forest, making love and pretending to be somebody else. She was happy herself and made other people happy, bringing about three weddings in one day. So Rosalind is the model for me, and I don't know nothin' more to say. Amen."

Mrs. Hadley. (Rising indignantly.) Well, ladies, I think we have heard enough of these essays produced by Miss Stewart's senior pupils. If the one we have listened to is the best of the three, as we were told, I for my part do not care to waste my time hearing the others.

Mrs. Aiken. I feel the same. It is a positive insult to our intelligence and literary taste to suppose that we would give the Shakespeare scholarship to a young person who has so grossly misunderstood our great dramatic poet, and whose style and language are below the level of even a Grammar

School pupil, and which are simply disgraceful in a High School graduate.

Mrs. Hadley. It is our duty to report the matter to the School Trustees, and induce them to raise the standard of both teacher and scholars.

Miss Stone. We will seek Miss Stewart and inform her of our united opinion regarding the essay of her "best pupil."
(*They all go out.—Patsy emerges from her hiding-place and dances about the room in high glee.*)

Patsy. O what fun! Such a joke on those precious old women, with their solemn faces and self-important airs! I've given them a shock that they won't get over for a long time. O wasn't it funny to see their horror and amazement! It is a wonder they don't give me the prize, since mine was the only composition they read, and they all agreed that it was quite original! I am very proud of it, and think I'll have it framed. (*Goes over to the table and takes up her composition as Rosemary enters.*)

Rosemary. Did the ladies leave the essays here? I will take them to Miss Stewart.

Patsy. (*Chuckling.*) The ladies wouldn't read those stupid things after they heard mine, which was so stunning and original that they wisely decided no other could hold a candle to it.

Rosemary. (*Astonished.*) Your composition, Patsy? What do you mean? Is that what you hold in your hands? Give it to me.

Patsy. (*Holding it tightly.*) No, I won't; it's mine and it gave me heaps of trouble to write, though I have had enough fun out of it to pay for the trouble. (*Looking aside.*) O heavens! here's Miss Stewart! I'd better skip. (*Runs out, holding her paper.*)

Miss Stewart. O Rosemary! I can not imagine what has happened: the ladies of the committee are all angry and indignant, saying that I have insulted them. They told me they had read only the first essay,—which was yours, you know,—and they said it was a disgrace to the school, incorrect and vulgar in style and shocking in its sentiments.

Rosemary. O Miss Stewart! I am very sorry you have been subjected to this annoyance, I fear that mischievous little

cousin of mine has played one of her tricks. She just told me that she had placed a composition of her own on top of the others, and no doubt that is the one the ladies read.

Miss Stewart. The little wretch! I should like to shake her.— But I must hasten to explain matters to the ladies, and urge them to read these essays, that they may ~~change~~ their opinions about the merits of my pupils' work, and give the promised scholarship. (*Takes up the essays.*) There are only two here, and yours is missing; how does that happen, Rosemary?

Rosemary. I hope you will not be offended, Miss Stewart, but I destroyed mine.

Miss Stewart. Why, Rosemary, what induced you to do that? You had the best chance of winning the prize.

Rosemary. Well, I preferred not to have it, Miss Stewart. Pauline had set her heart on winning the scholarship, and I did not wish her to be disappointed.

Miss Stewart. That was very generous of you, Rosemary, but I wish you had not done so. Well, it is too late to change things now. I can only urge the ladies to read these two essays and decide between them. I must hasten to explain matters, or the ladies will go away under their present mistaken impression. (*She hastens out with the papers.*)

Rosemary. Really, I shall have to remonstrate with Patsy. Her spirit of mischief is carried too far when it offends our visitors.

(*Mrs. Lindsey enters.*)

O Mrs. Lindsey! I am so glad you came. Do sit down, please; there are some questions I want to ask you.

Mrs. Lindsey. (*Aside*) Has the day of explanation arrived, the day I have always dreaded yet longed for?—I am always pleased to talk to you, Rosemary.

Rosemary. By accident, I overheard a few remarks that passed between Isabel and Pauline, and now I can think of nothing else.

Mrs. Lindsey (*Anxiously*) Their remarks did not pain you, I hope?

Rosemary. Not exactly, but I am astonished, bewildered. I went to Isabel afterwards, and made her tell me the truth. She informed me that people say I am not Mr. Belmont's

child, but only his adopted daughter. Do you think it is true?

Mrs. Lindsey. *(Slowly)* It may be so, Rosemary. Would the knowledge afflict you?

Rosemary. Not exactly; but *(proudly)* I do not wish to live on his bounty, if really I am nothing to him.

Mrs. Lindsey. But Mr. Belmont is fond of you Rosemary, and desires to see you happy.

Rosemary. I do not believe he cares a grain for me. I have always been pained by his coldness, and felt that he was not like other fathers. Now I understand why.

Mrs. Lindsey. But he will always provide for you, Rosemary, and intends to leave you his whole fortune; is not that worth having?

Rosemary. No, Mrs. Lindsey, not at such a price. I would renounce it all for the poorest home that a real father would give me, a father that cared for me.

Mrs. Lindsey. *(Distressed)* My poor child! but your own father is dead, and can not give you what you desire.

Rosemary. I know it,—Isabel told me so. But she said that perhaps my mother is living, and possibly you could tell me about her.

Mrs. Lindsey. *(Hesitating)* Yes, Rosemary, I think she is living; but perhaps—perhaps, after the way in which you have been brought up in ease and luxury, you would not care to live with her; she is comparatively poor and works to support herself.

Rosemary. *(Jumping up)* You are sure my mother is living? [Oh! tell me who she is and where I can find her, and I will leave this house to-day to go to her.

Mrs. Lindsey. Rosemary! you are excited, and do not consider the consequences of such a step.

Rosemary. I know perfectly well what it means,—that I may be a beggar tomorrow. But I should be far happier than I am amid these riches, if only I had some one whom I might call "mother", and who would give me a mother's love.

Mrs. Lindsey. *(Sadly)* Have you missed it so much, Rosemary?

Rosemary. Yes, more than I can express.—(*Sinks into a chair*) But perhaps—perhaps my mother never loved me, and that is why she gave me away to strangers. (*Weeps.*)

Mrs. Lindsey. (*In anguish*) O my child! never say that, never think it for a moment. Your mother loves you passionately and always did. It was a sad, sad mistake,—I see it now,—but she thought that what she did would insure your happiness.

Rosemary. I do not understand; please explain this mystery.

Mrs. Lindsey. After your father's death, your mother was left without means of support, and, as her own health was poor at that time and she did not expect to live long, she yielded to the persuasions of a rich friend, Mrs. Belmont, and permitted her to adopt you. But, O Rosemary! if you knew the anguish it cost your poor mother! She made the sacrifice for your sake, but it almost killed her. So you see, Rosemary, it was love for you, a mistaken love, perhaps, but not indifference, that made your mother give you up to strangers.

Rosemary. Then I will stay with them no longer. If you know where my mother is, O tell me at once, that I may go to her

Mrs. Lindsey. Be patient a little longer, Rosemary. There are some formalities to be settled first. After the death of Mrs. Belmont, you were legally adopted by her husband, and I must consult him before I reveal to you your mother's name.

Rosemary. I am sure it is an honorable name that I shall be proud to bear. If she is poor, I will share her poverty; if she is weak or ill, I will work my hands off before she shall want for anything. Tell her so, and that I have now but one thought in life, to know her, to care for her, and to love her.

Mrs. Lindsey. (*Much moved*) Your message will make her very happy, Rosemary, as she longs for your affection more than you can ever know. Think only of that, and forgive the unhappy mistake that has kept you and your poor mother apart all these sad years. —

Prepare now for your graduation to-morrow, and if possible, I will bring your mother to witness your triumph, and to offer her congratulations with the fond love that she has cherished for you since your childhood.

Rosemary. (*Joyfully*) O then indeed will my graduation day be the happiest day of my life.

CURTAIN

ACT II.

SCENE.—*A lawn on the school-grounds. A Maypole is erected in the centre. Rosemary enters dressed as the May Queen.*

Rosemary. (Looking around) No one here yet? The good Queen Victoria used to say that "Punctuality is the politeness of kings;" in that case, I can claim one of the attributes of royalty, even if my title of Queen is to last but this one May day. As I am the first to arrive, I shall inspect my domain. *(Moving about)* The grounds certainly look very pretty, and I hope our visitors will be favorably impressed.—How long the girls take to dress for their parts!—*(Smiling)* There is no honor in being a queen, if one has no subjects to rule over. Ah! here comes Laura.

Laura. (Curtsying) I greet you, my royal Sovereign! Am I your only subject?

Rosemary. (Laughing) Yes, thus far. I feel like quoting the poet,

"I am monarch of all I survey,
My right there is none to dispute;
From the centre all round to the sea,
I am lord of the fowl and the brute."

Annette. (Arriving) Now that's hard on us: am I a fowl—a goose, I suppose,—or a brute?

Rosemary. Neither, my dear; I am only quoting poetry, and, as Patsy says, nobody takes poetry seriously.

(Pauline enters.—Annette and Laura walk away and converse apart.)

Pauline. Why, how lovely you look as May Queen, Rosemary.

Rosemary. (Laughing) Your surprise modifies the compliment, Pauline.

Pauline. True. You see I am not used to paying compliments. But I am in an amiable mood to-day; guess why.

Rosemary. Probably because your own costume is very becoming.

Pauline. No, that's not the reason, though I am glad to hear that my appearance is attractive. I am happy because I have

been told that my dearest wish has been attained.

Rosemary. Really? I am very glad to hear it.

Pauline. Yes, Miss Stewart informed me that my essay on "Shakespeare's Women" was highly praised by the Committee, and I have gained the scholarship! Of course, I am delighted.

Rosemary. So am I, believe me, Pauline. Accept my hearty congratulations.

Pauline. Thank you. I am glad because of the honor, and because I need the money to help me through my University Course. But I can thank you for my success, Rosemary; Miss Stewart told me about your generous act, and I appreciate it very much.

Rosemary. O I am sorry Miss Stewart told you. You might have won the prize, anyway.

Pauline. Well, you made it certain, and I thank you for your self-denial. In return, I shall be your most obedient subject while you are Queen of May.

Rosemary. Thank you. I count on your aid to make a success of our festival this afternoon. Are the other girls ready to take part in the Maypole dance?

Pauline. I will go and see. *(The girls move away.)*

Rosemary. How shall I be able to keep my thoughts fixed on the day's celebrations and the part I am to play? I can think of nothing but the meeting with my mother. I wonder what she is like! She is good and true, I am sure, and I know I shall love her. O I love her already and long to tell her so. Mrs. Lindsey will keep her promise; I am certain, and bring my mother here to-day. To-day! it seems so wonderful, the fulfilment of all my dreams. Then I can truly sing with Tennyson's young May Queen, To-day "will be the happiest time of all the glad New Year", not because "I am to be Queen of the May," but because I am to find that most precious jewel, a mother's love, without which all the riches of earth are poor indeed.

(Patsy runs in dressed in fancy costume, and dances around Rosemary.)

Patsy. How do you like my dress, Rosemary? You know I am to be your maid-of-honor, and sit near you when you are on your throne.

Rosemary. Your costume is very pretty, Patsy dear, and I shall be happy to have you for my maid-of-honor; but how will you be able to sit still through all the ceremonies?

Patsy. I'll be good; you see! Uncle Franck sent you this for your graduation present. *(She offers a little morocco case.)*

Rosemary. That is very kind of father—of Mr. Belmont. *(She opens the case and takes out a gold locket.)* See, Patsy, how do you like this gold locket?

Patsy. O it's a beauty! I wish it were mine.

Rosemary. Perhaps I may give it to you some day.

Patsy. O that would be grand! *(She runs off.)*

Rosemary. I did not read what is on this card that accompanied my gift.—*(Reads)* "For Rosemary, with congratulations on her graduation.—Frank Belmont."

Could anything be more formal and cold? Well, I shall not grieve any more over Mr. Belmont's want of affection for me. I understand now; and it is true that I, also, feel little affection for him. However, I must not forget that he has been kind to me in his own way, even if it was not a father's way.—I will wear this locket to-day, and then give it to my little cousin. *(Patsy returns.)*

Patsy, do you know if your Uncle Frank is coming to the Graduation Exercises to-day?

Patsy. O I forget to give his message. Uncle Frank said to tell you that he was sorry but pressing business would prevent his coming to the Graduation Entertainment to-day, and he hoped you would have a good time.

Rosemary. *(Smiling sadly)* Thank you. He is generally busy on such occasions.

Patsy. But you are having a good time, aren't you, Rosie? I am.

Rosemary. I am glad, dear, that you are enjoying yourself.

Patsy. Good-bye! I'll be back soon. *(Runs off.)*

(A messenger comes in bringing a large bouquet of roses with a card attached.)

Messenger. A lady told me to give you these flowers, Miss.

Rosemary. *(Taking them)* O the beautiful roses! Who could have sent them to me? *(She reads the card:)* "To my own dear daughter Rosemary from her loving mother."—From my mother! O she must be near! Why can I not go to her

and press her to my heart, as I do these flowers? But I shall see her soon, I feel it, and this dear card tells me that she is thinking of me.

(Several girls approach.)

Isabel. Come, our chosen Queen of May, and take your place on your throne, this grassy mound, and witness the revels in your honor.

(Rosemary takes her place on the elevation, with her maids-of-honor beside her. Eight or ten girls in white and adorned with flowers execute a Maypole dance before her. —A suitable one is "Maypole Exercise and Dance" by A. Alexander, published by A. Flanagan Co., 521 South Laflin St., Chicago, Ill.)

(After the dance, the young girls gather around their May Queen.)

Pauline. *(Curtsying before her)* Well, your Majesty, are you pleased with our efforts to do you honor?

Rosemary. *(Rising)* The Maypole dance was very pretty and executed without a single error. To show my satisfaction, I will distribute to all the graceful performers these favors which I have provided for the purpose. —Patsy dear, will you hold these roses for a few moments? Take good care of them, for they are more precious in my sight than ornaments of gold. *(From a fancy, decorated basket, Rosemary distribute various favors to the girls of the dance. — As they scatter in different directions, leaving Rosemary alone, Mrs. Lindsey prettily attired advances towards her.)*

Mrs. Lindsey. *(Smiling)* Permit me to greet the young Queen of May.

Rosemary. O Mrs. Lindsey! you have come at last? I am so glad to see you. *(Glancing at her apparel)* Why, how charming you look in your festive attire!

Mrs. Lindsey. Do you really think so? Well, I am glad to hear it, for I desire to please my daughter, in whose honor I have decked myself, as it is her graduation day.

Rosemary. *(Astonished)* Your daughter! I didn't know you had one; you never spoke to me about her.

Mrs. Lindsey. No, my dear, but that is no sign that she was not ever present to my thoughts and her image fondly enshrined in my inmost heart.

Rosemary. You say that this is her graduation day? Then she must be a member of our class!

Mrs. Lindsey. Yes, I believe you know her. She is a dear sweet girl whom I love with all my heart, for whom I would sacrifice my very life; but alas! I am not sure of her feelings towards me.

Rosemary. (*Affectionately*) Then she does not know you, or she would be happy in the treasure she possesses. I wish you were my mother.

Mrs. Lindsey. (*Stretching out her arms to Rosemary*) My child, my own dear daughter! I have waited years to hear you utter those words! Do you mean them? Will you accept me for your mother?

Rosemary. Mother! are you indeed my mother?

Mrs. Lindsey. If I say "yes", will you be disappointed, my child, and leave me?

Rosemary. Never, Mother dear. (*Embracing her*) My own darling Mother! To think that I have found you at last! O I am too happy to speak. (*Again embraces her mother*) If I hesitated a moment to accept your statement, it was because I feared that my hopes deceived me, and that I should again be left lonely and motherless.

Mrs. Lindsey. You shall never be so again, dear, if it is in my power to make you happy.

Rosemary. So long as I can have you, Mother, to love and cherish, nothing else matters.

Mrs. Lindsey. Not even the loss of a fortune, Rosemary? for if you cease to appear as Mr. Belmont's daughter, he will no longer provide for you as such.

Rosemary. I do not wish to be supported by him, Mother. I will work and provide for you and me. You have been working all these years, dear Mother, while I have been living in ease and luxury. Now we shall reverse those conditions.—

(*Some girls draw near.*)

Isabel! Pauline! Come here, please, and let me present you to my lovely mother, Mrs. Lindsey.

Pauline. I congratulate you on your new-found happiness, Rosemary, for I know how much it means to you.

Isabel. But you must still allow us to consider you as our cousin, Rosemary; for we have grown fond of you under that title.

Rosemary. Very well, Isabel, for I appreciate your friendship and wish to retain it. But from this day you must consider yourselves as the heiresses of Mr. Belmont's fortune, for I would not accept what does not come to me by right. I shall not miss it; I am too happy in my new-found treasure. *(Puts her arm affectionately around her mother.)* A mother's love is BETTER THAN GOLD.

END.

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